

From the Army Acquisition Executive Untold Good News From Iraq



Prior to Saddam Hussein's oppressive regime, Iraq was the second-richest country in the Persian Gulf region. Still, after 30 years of willful neglect and treasury-draining regional wars, Iraq's once modern infrastructure lay in ruin.

For the last three years, solid progress has been made to rebuild Iraq's critical infrastructure. All of Iraq's industrial sectors — oil, water, electrical power, education, agriculture, facilities and security — have benefited from U.S. investment in its economic revitalization and reconstruction. While there have been setbacks caused by corruption and terrorism, construction continues to progress with the help of Coalition Forces and the new Iraqi government.

In June 2004, with the Coalition Provisional Authority's closing, the Department of the Army was designated as the primary agency providing program and contracting support to the Iraq reconstruction mission. This office was already onboard awarding contracts and establishing a team forward to define requirements and work with the Iraqi ministries to identify needed projects. This eventually led to the creation of the Joint Contracting Command Iraq/Afghanistan. Also in June 2004, the Project and Contracting Office was established and placed under my authority to manage this tremendous effort both in-country and with reach-back support here in Washington, DC. As a result of these efforts in partnership with the State Department and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, tangible results are being realized.

The oil industry capacity is now above 2002 levels. Substantial investments have been made in the entire oil infrastructure system to help provide long-term stability, such as improvements to oil wells, pipelines and oil refinement facilities. U.S. assistance has significantly improved water and sewage services for Iraqis. In April 2003, it was clear that many of the country's water treatment plants were in serious disrepair and that many Iraqis received water that was contaminated or inadequately treated. Since that time, completed U.S. projects have increased potable water availability to an estimated 4.2 million additional residents, and an estimated 5.1 million additional people now have access to sewage treatment.

In addition, U.S. projects have added or restored some 2,700 Megawatts of electrical generation capacity to Iraq's electrical grid, affecting more

than 3 million homes. In the pre-war period, Baghdad received a greater share of electricity at the rest of the country's expense, but today, power is more equitably distributed. Most Iraqis now receive 12 to 14 hours of electricity, and those in and around Baghdad are receiving 8 to 10 additional hours.

Iraq reconstruction effort leaders are often asked, "Are we making a difference in the life of the average Iraqi?" The answer is "yes." The proof is in their actions: Iraqi mothers and fathers are sending their children to new schools with improved curriculums; many are enjoying clean water and better sanitation; they are buying new air conditioners and other appliances (making it difficult for power generation and distribution improvements to keep up). Iraqis are also enjoying the widespread use of cell phones and can now call an ambulance or the police in many areas when they need emergency services. Additionally, to increase safety and security, hundreds of law enforcement and border police facilities have been built.

In sum, the numbers of completed projects throughout Iraq — including large and complex oil, water and electrical plants — have been truly staggering. More than 3,900 projects have been started, more than 3,100 of these projects have been completed with the remainder under construction.

This rebuilding program is an effort to build a foundation for freedom for the Iraqis. The original goal was not to rebuild their whole society, but rather to provide a fresh start for them to continue to build upon. We realize that as we hand off critical programs and projects, the need for capacity development grows even more important. Thousands of training sessions and workshops have been conducted to prepare Iraqis to assume control of reconstruction projects. A special program teaching women-owned small businesses in Iraq has resulted in numerous opportunities for these firms to win contracts.

Through the work on the ground and partnering efforts, we are helping Iraq and its people make their journey toward freedom and improvement in their lives and, most importantly, helping them realize that the future is in their hands.

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